

VZCZCXRO8643
PP RUEHBZ RUEHGI
DE RUEHGI #0034/01 0390758
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P R 080758Z FEB 10
FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1154
INFO RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 0027
RHMFISS/AFRICOM
RUEHBZ/AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE 0279
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0380
RUEHKI/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA 0393
RUEHLC/AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE 0292
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0235
RUEHNJ/AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA 0581
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0579
RUEHDS/USMISSION USAU ADDIS ABABA 0004
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0208
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 0559
RUEHGI/AMEMBASSY BANGUI 1465

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGUI 000034

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/C
USUN FOR DMUERS
PARIS FOR RKANEDA
LONDON FOR FLORD
AFRICOM FOR JKUGEL
INR FOR JPEKKINEN
DRL FOR SCRAMPTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [CT](#)

SUBJECT: CAR: FORMER MINISTER AND CURRENT MILITA LEADER LIKELY
MURDERED

REF: A. A- 09 BANGUI 203
[1](#)B. B- 09 BANGUI 273
[1](#)C. C- 10 BANGUI 29

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Charles Massi, a four-time former minister and political head of the Patriotic Convention for Justice and Peace (CPJP) militia group (Ref A), is widely presumed murdered after Chadian forces arrested him and turned him over to Central African authorities in December 2009. While few in the Central African Republic (CAR) mourn his passing, some in the country worry his killing may signal a return to the political violence of regimes past. Furthermore, the possible summary execution of a political figure, albeit a disgraced one representing forces in active conflict with the CARG, could be seen as a message from Bozize that his patience for negotiation with the myriad armed groups in the CAR has run out. Post will closely monitor the fallout among the opposition and watch for any signs that this may become a pattern by the regime. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The death of former minister and CPJP representative Charles Massi remains shrouded in mystery. Yet increasingly, credible sources with insider knowledge report in vivid detail the people involved in the turnover of the former minister to Central African authorities and his alleged murder shortly thereafter. According to one source, President Deby of Chad turned over Massi to Bozize's forces during an end of the year visit by the CAR president to Chad. Reportedly, Bozize assured Deby that he had nothing personally against Massi and that they shared a strong bond stemming from membership in the same Free Mason Lodge. Very shortly after taking custody of Massi, however, Central African military personnel allegedly tortured and killed him. The ``Lettre du Continent'' has published such a report.

[1](#)3. (SBU) A very well informed western contact in Bangui believes Massi was summarily executed by the Presidential Guard (GP)

shortly after being turned over by the Chadians in retaliation for the killing of a prominent Gbaya military officer during the CPJP's November 2009 attack on Ndele (Ref B). (Note: President Bozize and a large number of the GP are closely-related members of the Gbaya ethnic group. End Note.)

¶4. (SBU) On January 30, Bozize convoked the Central African political class and diplomatic corps to discuss the elections and broached the subject of Massi (Ref C). After listening to the charges against him, Bozize gave a cryptic non-answer about Massi's fate. He questioned why people were so concerned about a man who was in open rebellion against the government and why there was not a similar outcry when Massi's militia killed Central African soldiers. Bozize stated that Massi knew full well that issues are ``settled with Kalashnikovs'' during such affairs. A January 20 press release by the Ministry of Defense was more vehement in its denial of complicity, belittling the claims of government responsibility as an ``intoxication campaign'' aimed at destabilizing the DDR process and the government in general.

¶5. (SBU) The opposition is trying to use the Massi affair to tar Bozize as an oppressive despot. The newspapers carry constant updates about rumors and allegations and his fate is widely discussed within political circles in Bangui. Yet, as is so often the case in the CAR, the opposition has not been able to marshal the anger over Massi's killing into action. Their disunity - coupled with the ambivalence by the average Central African, who sees Massi as merely another politician who played with fire - means that though there have been wide discussions about the man, no popular action has been taken to demand accountability from the government.

BANGUI 00000034 002 OF 002

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: Disappearances were common place during President/Emperor Bokassa's time (1966-79) and briefly resurfaced after the coup attempts against President Kolingba in 1982 and President Patasse in 2001 (Comment: Bozize, who was Chief of Staff of the Army under Patasse, is implicated in ordering the killing of several anti-Kolingba rebels in Kembe prefecture in 1999. End Comment). Bozize is thought to have liquidated a small, select group of Patasse sympathizers after his 2003 coup, but this was targeted and short in duration. Since that time, abductions and murder without due process have been very rare; and nonexistent for prominent political figures.

¶7. (SBU) It is unclear if Massi was killed under direct orders from the President, or if the assassination was endorsed after the fact. Regardless of Bozize's direct or indirect implication in the killing of Massi, the opposition, and indeed some figures closer to the President, worry the killing may be the start of a policy of intimidation. During his New Years address to the nation in Sango (not included in the French version) he did warn he would ``carve up'' all those who opposed him, and has indeed pursued a policy of confrontation with the armed groups, such as the CPJP, that remain outside of the DDR process. It is currently unclear if the apparent extra-judicial killing of Massi was an anomaly or the beginning of an unfortunate trend.
END COMMENT.
COOK